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HONG KONG-UK:

Negotiations To Resume

The announcement on Sunday that China and the UK will resume negotiations on the future of Hong Kong next month will buoy local confidence temporarily at most. [redacted]

London had postponed a scheduled June meeting of the negotiating group handling the return of the colony to Chinese sovereignty because of Beijing's crackdown on prodemocracy demonstrators, and the plan is now for the group to meet twice before the end of the year. Next month it probably will discuss UK proposals to bar the Chinese military from Hong Kong and Beijing's agreement to guarantee human rights in Hong Kong's Basic Law. Last week British Foreign Secretary Major asserted it was Beijing's responsibility to restore confidence in Hong Kong by accepting these measures, according to press reports. [redacted]

In the past month Beijing has tried to ease the fears of Hong Kong residents by restating its commitment to maintain Hong Kong's present system and by inviting members of the Basic Law Drafting Committee to talk with top leaders in Beijing—with little success. A recent public opinion poll indicates most Hong Kong residents believe China will not tolerate Hong Kong's freewheeling press or relatively open political process after 1997. Reports that China is pressing the UK to restrict the activities of prodemocracy groups in Hong Kong, the slump in the local stock and property markets, and infighting between political interests are feeding the anxiety. [redacted]

[redacted] The renewal of consultations on the colony's future may ease local fears temporarily. [redacted]

Beijing, however, is embarrassed and angered by Hong Kong's continuing support for the prodemocracy movement and is unlikely to make any concessions it believes will weaken Chinese control over the territory after 1997. [redacted]

[redacted]